

MAY 22, 1980

The May 3rd primary election in Mertzon was so quiet that the unopposed nominee for sheriff spent the day chasing speeders from out of town. Coffeehouse handicapping of the races was dull and unemotional. The old fever of small town politics failed to rise enough to even bring back memories of the heated disagreements that once were so much of the scene.

Three of my compadres ran for county commissioner of the precinct where the ranch is located. I was unable to vote in the race as my house in town is in another district. I sure wasn't disappointed because it would've been a tough vote to cast with three guys running that I like a whole lot.

After the election, I learned that Goat Whiskers the Younger was blabbing it around that I had deliberately chosen a neutral zone for a homestead. Young Whiskers' imagination runs to the same extremes that the Mississippi River reaches at high flood stage. Whiskers can see some sugar ants building a mound in the draw of one of his pastures and by the time he has reached the house, he is able to tell the ASC that he has a spreader dam under construction. I've often wished that we needed an Uncle Remus in the Shortgrass Country. Whiskers is a big league story teller.

I certainly wouldn't object to living in a neutral zone. For the past 16 years, it's seemed that everyone of my candidates has ended up needing more help from the grand jury than from the electorate. So many of my choices have been sent to jail that the only sensible way I've been able to lobby was through the wardens' offices or the parole boards.

These disappointments have changed my policy toward the would-be ruling class. Nowadays when a candidate writes for support, I forward the following question before I join him:

1. Do you have losses of memory, blackouts, or any condition related to amnesia?
2. Do you make timely payment of your state and federal taxes? Please enclose certified copies of all returns and receipts.
3. In your handwriting, define the difference between a bribe and a campaign contribution. Put this in deposition form acceptable as testimony in district court.
4. Have you or any of your immediate or distant relations attended any picnics on an island or been involved in any misfortunes on bridges or ferries? Be specific and keep Question One in mind.
5. In the course of your secondary and college education have you been associated with or introduced to any female that is actively employed in the lower arts such as go-go dancing, night club acts, burlesque, or taxi dancing?
6. If you have ever held public office, please submit notarized copies of your expense accounts, including a copy of the airplane's log if one was furnished in your behalf.

So far, not one questionnaire has been returned. Solicitations to serve as campaign manager are way down. It sure is good insurance to protect yourself. Particularly if all you ever heard good about one of your candidates was that he was made a trusty.